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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
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Item 5 of the provisional agenda*
Implementation of article 21 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Reports provided by specialized agencies of the United Nations on the implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their activities

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

1. On behalf of the Committee, the Secretariat invited the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), on 29 April 1999, to submit to the Committee by 15 May 1999 a report on information provided by States to FAO on the implementation of article 14 and related articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which would supplement the information contained in the reports of the States parties to the Convention that will be considered at the twenty-first session. Annexed to the present note is a country brief prepared by FAO on Nepal.

2. Other information sought by the Committee refers to activities, programmes and policy decisions undertaken by FAO to promote the implementation of article 14 and related articles of the Convention.

3. The report annexed hereto has been submitted in compliance with the Committee's request.

* CEDAW/C/1999/II/1.

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Annex

Country brief on Nepal prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Key facts

1. More than 90 per cent of Nepal's population (18.5 million) lives in rural areas.

2. Some 90.5 per cent of women are engaged in agriculture against 74.9 per cent of men.

3. Women have extensive workloads with dual responsibility for farm and household production.

4. Women's work is getting harder and more time-consuming due to ecological degradation.

Agriculture

5. Nepal's agricultural production is characterized by diversity in farming systems influenced by differences in agro-ecological topography. Farming systems and crops vary widely depending upon altitude and climatic conditions.

6. The agricultural sector contributed 40.22 per cent to the gross domestic product in 1995/96. A large majority of households depend upon agriculture and related activities such as livestock-rearing and forest product collection. As the agriculture sector is the key sector of the economy, determining economic growth and employment, the standard of living of the majority of the population depends on its development.

Women in agriculture

7. In addition to routine domestic work, women play a significant if not a predominant role in agriculture production. Women, both as participants and decision makers, share the responsibility of planting, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, carrying grains to the mill for grinding, including collecting wood, water and fodder. Women's involvement is very significant in care and management of livestock and poultry, and kitchen gardening.

Women in rural production

8. Livestock, particularly dairy production, is a major source of income for women and sale of livestock and livestock products accounts for nearly 55 per cent of total farm family income.

9. Women have a central role in informal trade, selling food and vegetables. Production credit for rural women has supported women's handicrafts as income-generating activities such as rice straw paper making, agro-products and handicrafts.

Crop production, forestry, fisheries and livestock

10. Nepalese women are equally involved in both field and post-harvest work in crop production. Ploughing is considered a man's job whereas all other work, though shared by men, is mostly undertaken by women. In both rainfed and irrigated agriculture time spent by women is higher relative to that of men.

11. Women in rural Nepal have a very close relationship with forests. Collecting fuelwood meets 95 per cent of the cooking-energy consumption. Collecting fodder and other forest products are traditionally and primarily performed by women. More than three fourths of household time spent collecting forest products is done by women. Forests and woodlands are owned by the State in Nepal.[a] The feudal land tenure system is characterized by concentration of ownership. The forested area of Nepal has declined within the last 30 years as a result of extensive use of firewood as fuel, uncontrolled grazing, the clearance of land for cultivation and overexploitation for commercial purposes.[b]

12. Normally fisheries activities in Nepal are performed by men. However, with the promotion of aquaculture in the country, the greater involvement of women can be envisaged. They will be increasingly involved in fish feeding and pond maintenance, which require intensive daily management.

Women and the environment

13. Rural women in Nepal are not only household managers but also, formally or informally, resource managers.

14. The degradation of the environment, caused by the burgeoning population, has already significantly affected women's lives. As deforestation advances and forest

products become increasingly scarce, women are the ones who must walk further afield to collect fuel and fodder, adding hours to their already long workdays. When deforestation is high, time needed to collect one load of fuelwood increases by 75 per cent and less time is allocated to agricultural activities.

Role of women in achieving food security

15. It is estimated that 49 per cent of Nepal's population are living in absolute poverty.[c] Nutritional deficiency is thought to affect 40 per cent or more of the population of 18.5 million.

16. Women are more vulnerable than men. In a predominately rural community that is involved in agriculture characterized by incidence of poverty, rural food security is of primary concern.

17. Women as producers of food and livestock, as well as primary meal makers, have an important responsibility to ensure household food security. As primary managers of livestock, women ensure a supply of high quality protein to the country. Women dominate home garden production and thus contribute to improved variety in the family diet. Women's role in fuel collection also has implications for household food security.[d]

18. Nepalese rural women play a vital role in post-harvest activities in food crops, cash crops, horticulture and sea harvest, for example by making puffed rice. The domestic responsibility for food processing is vested with women. Parallel to the formal growth in post-harvest responsibilities, women are also the primary food processors for the informal vending sector.[e]

Access of women to resources

19. Despite the important role of women in agriculture, traditional social norms and customary laws which are generally biased in favour of men, are a barrier to women's equitable access to productive resources.

20. Although women's labour inputs to agriculture are often higher than that of men, they rarely have access to extension services, institutional credit or production inputs. Extension agents mainly target male farmers. Consequently, women farmers' food production is often insufficient and the productivity of their labour remain low.

21. Most rural women struggle under domestic drudgery which could be eliminated by providing them with services and tools at reasonable cost. In Nepal, the farmers profile on the use of technology is overwhelmingly biased towards men. Women have different priorities, different patterns of land use, and different skills to be encouraged. Their immediate priority is technology to save time in daily household labour.[e]

Women and the policy environment

22. Women's important role and contribution to agriculture remained nearly invisible to policy and decision makers in Nepal before the restoration of democracy in 1990. The eighth development plan (1992–1997) introduced the first efforts by requiring that a Women Farmers Development Division be established within the Ministry of Agriculture. The Division's mandate is to mainstream gender issues in all agricultural policies and programmes and to increase the participation of women farmers in Ministry activities and programmes.

23. In the long-term Agriculture Perspective Plan, developed by His Majesty's Government of Nepal, the Division ensured that issues regarding the access of women to production inputs and credits and their active participation in income-generating and marketing activities were emphasized.[f]

FAO gender activities/programmes in Nepal

Hills Leasehold Forestry and Forage Development, phase II

24. **Objective.** The project will ensure the development of appropriate and gender-sensitive technical models for rehabilitation of degraded forest land in association with improved livestock management.

25. **Gender component.** Through assistance of a national consultant, gender mainstreaming approaches will be integrated in the Hills Leasehold Forestry and Forage Development. Gender sensitivity review and analysis of all components, activities and programmes of the project is foreseen. There will be field activities aimed to strengthen leasehold groups, in particular the role and position of women.

Participatory Watershed Management Training in Asia, regional project

26. **Objective.** The project will provide methodologies for participatory watershed management, including gender issues.

27. **Gender component.** The project will focus on the integration of women in participatory watershed and natural resource management; improving participatory tools with gender integration and gender analysis; and training of officials in these issues.

28. The FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific undertook a series of activities aimed at gender mainstreaming in technical programmes in Nepal during 1998:

(a) In March 1998, gender analysis and planning training was undertaken for the field level officers in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Farmer Centered Resource Management Programme. The trainees were from China, India, Nepal, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam. The gender planning training applied the FAO socio-economic and gender analysis framework.

(b) In the context of World Food Summit Plan of Action, the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific organized various meetings to highlight the roles of women in household food security. In June 1998, the FAO Regional Programme in Women in Development, in collaboration with Kasetsart University, Thailand, and Peanut Collaborative Research Support Program of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), organized a technical consultation on gender roles in peanut sector for household food security. The countries represented were Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam.

(c) Another technical consultation was held in September 1998 with a focus on intra-household dynamics and household food security. The countries who participated were Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, Pakistan and the Philippines.

(d) The FAO Forest, Trees and People Programme (FTPP) undertakes activities in Nepal through Women Acting Together for Change (WATCH), focusing on support to non-governmental organizations and rural people's organizations. FTPP is supporting the organization of field-based, collaborative, international training in participatory planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, bringing together trainers and materials from a variety of field-based projects, forest departments and national training institutes.

Recommendations

29. In order to support effective and equitable agricultural and rural development, there is a need:

(a) To make available socio-economic and gender awareness training and sensitization for planners, policy makers and field staff, focusing on practical tools to rectify current gender biases in planning, policy, agricultural research and extension delivery;

(b) To strengthen gender-equitable extension systems;

(c) To collect gender-disaggregated data through participatory approaches for local planning;

(d) To formulate gender-sensitive policies and plans based on gender roles related to household livelihood strategies and rural poverty and household food security concerns;

(e) To make provision to support natural resource management, farm production and household resource management focusing on women as farmers.

Notes

[a] Land tenure and the management of land and trees in Asia and Africa, K. Otsuka, F. Place, 1999.

[b] Economist Intelligence Unit, country profile on Nepal, 1998/99.

[c] National Planning Commission, Economist Intelligence Unit, 1997.

[d] "Women in Agriculture, Environment and Rural Production", FAO Fact Sheet, 1998.

[e] "Rural Women and Food Security, Current Situation and Perspectives", FAO, 1997.

[f] "Gender and Participation in Agricultural Planning, Lessons from Nepal", FAO, 1997.